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ABSTRACT

The research literature is full of studies about attitudes of black students toward white students and vice versa, but more often such studies lack generalizable measures and contain methodological problems. This study was concerned with a standardized measure of university student perceptions and expectations (College and University Environment Scales CUES), thought to be appropriate for administering to black and white freshmen attending a large, predominantly white university. Means and standard deviations and the 66 plus -33 minus scale scores were reported for each sample. Differences between black and white CUES scale scores were determined using t at the .05 level. Black freshmen expected more Practicality and Propriety and less Awareness using the mean scoring method. Similar results occurred with the 66 -33 minus method except Propriety just missed being significant. A discussion of the results was presented and research questions suggested. (Author)

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EXPECTATIONS OF BLACK AND WHITE UNIVERSITY FRESHMEN

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and William E. Sedlacek

Research Report # 7-73

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SUMMARY

The research literature is full of studies about attitudes of black students toward white students and vice versa, but more often such studies lack generalizable measures and contain methodological problems. This study was concerned with a standardized measure of university student perceptions and expectations (College and University Environment Scales [CUES]), thought to be appropriate for administering to black and white freshmen attending a large, predominantly white university. Means and standard deviations and the 66 plus -33 minus scale scores were reported for each sample. Differences between black and white CUES scale scores were determined using t at the .05 level. Black freshmen expected more Practicality and Propriety and less Awareness using the mean scoring method. Similar results occurred with the 66 plus -33 minus method except Propriety just missed being significant. A discussion of the results was presented and research questions suggested.

The research literature is full of studies about attitudes of black students toward white students and vice versa, but more often such studies lack generalizable measures and contain methodological problems. Pace (1963, 1967) developed a standardized instrument (the College and University Environment Scales [CUES]) which could be used to compare campus subcultures, i.e., black and white students. The CUES appears particularly appealing as a technique for the study of black students on the predominantly white campus but this apparently has not been done. Pace developed the CUES as a measure of perception of the campus environment held by students, but also employed the CUES as a measure of expectations for new students. Given that the research literature reports many differences between recent entering black and white students, any differences determined by the CUES, a standardized instrument, would lend support to local, previously non-generalizable studies. Thus, the purpose of this study was limited to a comparison of the expectations of entering black and white freshmen at a major university. (For a summary of research literature on black and white student differences, see Harnett [1969]; Van Arsdale, Sedlacek and Brooks [1971]; Sedlacek, Brooks and Herman [1971]; Bayer [1972]; DiCesare, Sedlacek and Brooks [1972]; Brooks and Sedlacek [1973]; and Sedlacek and Brooks [1973].)

Method

Black freshmen enrolled in a special program (N=86) were administered the CUES during an orientation session prior to their matriculation. The special program consists of counseling and tutoring aimed at increasing academic achievement. A white freshman comparison sample (N=86) was randomly drawn from a population of 467 freshmen who attended a two-day orientation program and should have been representative of white entering freshmen. Trained integrated teams administered the CUES in the orientation program while the special program students were administered the CUES by a black team.

Results

Means and standard deviations and the 66 plus -33 minus scale scores were reported for each sample. Differences between black and white CUES scale scores were determined using *t* at the .05 level. Table 1 shows that blacks expected more Practicality and Propriety and less Awareness using the mean scoring method. Table 2 shows similar results using the 66 plus -33 minus method except Propriety just missed being significant.

Discussion

Entering black and white freshmen did have different expectations of the campus environment. Black freshmen tended to put more weight on the practical aspects of the environment, i.e., knowing the right people, being in the right place and doing the right things in order to gain personal status (Practicality scale). A study by Sedlacek and Brooks (1973), using the same black sample, reported that external control and high academic achievement were related. These black freshmen tended to be structure-oriented, a trait very much like the Practicality dimension of the CUES. The black freshmen also tended to give more weight to group standards of decorum. According to Pace (1963, 1967), this means the absence of demonstrative convention or flouting behavior (Propriety scale). However, blacks have been represented as being politically active and vociferous in pushing for change in higher education; an image very different from what the Propriety dimension purports to measure. The likely answer is that the CUES reflects the psychological dimension, not the behavior dimension. The evidence indicates that black freshmen experience longer and more difficult adjustments to the predominantly white campus (Farver, Sedlacek and Brooks, 1973) and much of their adjustment process appears to be that of "fitting-in" and "feeling-out" the student body. Black student demonstrations, demands for black studies programs, more faculty and staff, and greater social consciousness are expressions

of psychological needs rather than representative lifestyles. Their lower expectations of the campus environment as a place where personal awareness might be developed (Awareness scale) helps explain this point. Black freshmen tended to feel that there is less opportunity to search for personal meaning, self-understanding and self-image at a major, predominantly white university. Then why do black students attend white universities? Sedlacek, Brooks and Herman (1971) reported that the greater the number of blacks attending a predominantly white university, the more likely it is to become a pleasant and natural place for blacks. Thus, there is an apparent ambiguity in choosing a predominantly white university where both physical and psychological adjustment problems are expected. The writers are reminded of a black male undergraduate who once remarked "blacks should attend white schools to experience the racism they'll later find in life, it'll be a toughening-up process and they'll be that much more prepared when they graduate." However, other studies also indicate that blacks attend predominantly white schools for very practical reasons, such as interest in a particular curriculum, or because of geographical location, or relatively low cost.

The white freshmen did not give as much weight to the Practicality or Propriety dimensions of the campus environment as did blacks. They did expect, however, an environment which emphasized search for personal meaning, self-understanding and self-image. Both black and white freshmen expected the campus to reflect about the same amount of congeniality (Community scale) and academic emphasis (Scholarship scale), because no significant differences were found between these scales.

When a profile of the scale scores of the black freshmen was drawn and compared with national norms, as reported by Pace (1967), their scale scores indicated that they should attend a large, public or private, general university,

such as the University of Maryland. In other words these black freshmen should attend a large, predominantly white university even though they bring different concerns and expectations. Their profile which contained lower scores, with the exception of the Practicality scale, suggested more realism, according to the interpretation given by Pace (1967). But in more practical terms, this probably means that black freshmen are more guarded and more cautious than white freshmen in a predominantly white setting. The national profile of freshmen as reported by Pace (1967) indicated that freshmen are more unrealistic and show higher expectations than the University of Maryland sample.

So what can be said about the CUES and black freshmen? It appears that the CUES is appropriate for administering to black students and that it probably has substantiated differences between black and white students reported in the research literature. Still, little remains known about the functional relationships between black student achievement and positive environmental factors. We have known for a good while that motivation of students is influenced by environmental factors and that institutional racism, in particular, affects black students. The Awareness scale has been shown to correlate with achievement of black students and the Practicality scale has been shown to correlate with locus of control in black students. These warrant further study, as does the application of the CUES to other black samples to examine their profiles.

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TABLE 1

Mean Scoring Method for the CUES Using Black and White Freshmen

DIMENSION	WHITE (*N*=86) MEAN	S.D.	BLACK (*N*=86) MEAN	S.D.	*t*
Practicality	10.09	2.87	11.83	3.03	3.97*
Communality	10.77	3.48	11.26	3.22	.84
Awareness	14.90	3.31	12.98	3.65	3.68*
Propriety	5.98	3.00	8.58	3.23	5.64*
Scholarship	12.51	3.15	12.53	3.40	.09

* significant at .05 level

TABLE 2

66 Plus 33 Minus Scoring Method for the CUES
Using Black and White Freshmen

DIMENSION	WHITE (*N*=86) SCALE SCORE	BLACK (*N*=86) SCALE SCORE	SIGNIFICANT SCALE DIFFERENCE
Practicality	20	26	*
Communality	23	25	
Awareness	35	30	*
Propriety	9	13	
Scholarship	28	26	

* Scale differences ±5 points considered significant (see Pace, 1967 p.42).